IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 31-33, 35, 37, 39 and 45 as follows:

31. (Currently amended) A synthetic peptide comprising a regulatory virus protein R (Vpr) of the human immunodeficiency virus type 1(HIV-1) (SEQ ID NO: 1), or a fragment or variant thereof, wherein the fragment or variant thereof consists of a peptide selected from the group consisting of:

(a) a 20 amino acid Vpr protein ($sVpr^{1-20}$ or $sVpr^{21-40}$; SEQ ID NO: 8 and 9, respectively);

(b) a 47 amino acid N-terminal peptide ($sVpr^{1-47}$);

(c) a 49 amino acid long C-terminal peptide ($sVpr^{48-96}$); or

(d) a fragment of at least 15 amino acids of any one of (a)-(c).

32. (Currently amended) ~~A fragment of the~~ The synthetic peptide of claim 31, consisting of $sVpr^{1-96}$ (SEQ ID NO: 1) ~~a peptide selected from the group consisting of:~~

~~(a) a 20 amino acid Vpr protein ($sVpr^{1-20}$ or $sVpr^{21-40}$; SEQ ID NO: 8 and 9, respectively);~~

~~(d) a 47 amino acid N-terminal peptide ($sVpr^{1-47}$);~~

~~(e) a 49 amino acid long C-terminal peptide ($sVpr^{48-96}$); or~~

~~(f) a fragment of at least 15 amino acids of any one of (a)-(e).~~

33. (Currently amended) The synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim ~~32~~ 31, wherein the fragment consists of:

(a) $_{s}Vpr^{11-25}$ (SEQ ID NO: 4);

(b) $_{s}Vpr^{41-55}$ (SEQ ID NO: 5);

(c) $_{s}Vpr^{46-60}$ (SEQ ID NO: 6); or

(d) $_{s}Vpr^{56-70}$ (SEQ ID NO: 7).

34. (Previously added) The synthetic peptide of claim 31 bound to a second molecule, wherein the second molecule comprises a DNA or protein molecule.

35. (Currently amended) The synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 bound to a second molecule, wherein the second molecule comprises a DNA or protein molecule.

36. (Previously added) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide of claim 31 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

37. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

38. (Previously added) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide of claim 34 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

39. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 35 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

40. (Previously added) A method of producing synthetic peptides derived from the regulatory virus protein R (Vpr) of HIV-1, the method comprising:

(a) synthesizing C-terminal Vpr peptides on a serine resin; and

(b) synthesizing N-terminal Vpr peptides on a polystyrene polyoxyethylene resin;

wherein chain elongation of the peptides is performed using fluoromethyloxycarbonyl (FMOC) protection.

41. (Previously added) The method of claim 40, further comprising:

(c) cleaving protection groups using a cleavage mixture comprising 95% trifluoracetic acid (TFA), 3% triisopropylsilane and 2-5% ethyandithiol.

42. (Previously added) The method of claim 40, further comprising purifying the peptides by HPLC on a column of silica gel using a linear gradient of TFA and water in acetonitrile.

43. (Previously added) A synthetic Vpr peptide produced by the method of claim 40.

44. (Previously added) A biological assay system comprising a synthetic peptide of claim 31 immobilized on a substrate.

45. (Currently amended) A biological assay system comprising a peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 immobilized on a substrate.

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46. (Previously added) The biological assay system of claim 44, which comprises an ELISA.

47. (Previously added) The biological assay system of claim 45, which comprises an ELISA.